

# RACHEL HELLENGA

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**OBJECTIVE:** Creative leadership position in an organization dedicated to education and social change

## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

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I lead high-performing teams to create world-class exhibitions and programs that evoke wonder, inspire experimentation, and bring people together in memorable settings.

- Demonstrated ability to attract funding from foundations, corporations, and individuals
- Passion for integrating research on family learning, inclusive design, and visitor research into visitor experiences
- Track record for innovative product development which includes two US patents and additional patents pending

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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**HELLENGA PROJECTS** – Elmhurst, IL

January 2012 to present

### *Principal*

Perform strategic planning, conceptual development, fundraising, and project management for clients pursuing new construction, building renovation, or major exhibition initiatives. Manage in-house teams and external vendors to deliver compelling learning experiences which engage audiences, attract funding, and drive attendance. Assist museum associations to communicate best practices in informal learning. Selected Client Projects:

#### Strategic planning and fundraising

##### **DISCOVERY MUSEUM** – Acton, MA

Developed fundraising strategy for several projects in the museum's master plan. Won four consecutive IMLS grants totaling \$500K for topics including math anxiety/math learning, early brain development, and inclusion.

##### **THE WORKS** – Bloomington, MN

Researched recommendations for the museum's strategic plan. Outlined key trends in engineering education, technology innovation and museum visitor demographics. Mentored team in development of *Sensor Zone* exhibit.

#### Research on best practices in the field of informal learning

##### **CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF INFORMAL SCIENCE EDUCATION** – Washington, D.C.

Managed team of senior museum professionals to produce *The Principal Investigator's Guide: Managing Evaluation in Informal STEM Education* in the form of an interactive online guide.

##### **ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY CENTERS** – Washington, D.C.

Conducted practitioner interviews and reviewed academic research to produce articles for [informalscience.org](http://informalscience.org) on topics including makerspace learning and informal science education networks and partnerships.

##### **ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS** – Washington, D.C.

Reviewed best practices in inclusive design for the Advancing Accessibility in Museums project. Established a rubric categorizing inclusive design initiatives and selected museums with notable practices.

#### Technology Development

##### **GREAT LAKES SCIENCE CENTER** – Cleveland, OH

Oversaw *Mission to STEM* project. Led multimedia vendors and in-house staff in development and production of mobile app which brought NASA artifacts to life. Wrote initial project description for successful \$1M NASA grant.

##### **DUPAGE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM** – Naperville, IL

Collaborated with DCM to procure funding from the Maker Ed Foundation. Developed materials and curriculum for Teknistas summer camp. Designed light-up backpack projects and beta-tested activities during one-week camp.

**ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & EDUCATION CENTER** – SKOKIE, IL

June 2010 to December 2011

### *Director of Program Services*

Reported to President and CEO. Led the Marketing, Exhibitions, Collections, and Education Departments. Presented metrics to the Board of Directors as a member of the senior management team. Gained experience in branding, marketing, public relations, and advertising. Led *Make a Difference!* anti-bullying initiative featuring a children's exhibition, school outreach program, and a symposium for Chicago-area high school principals.

- Served as liaison to Exhibit and Programs Committee of the Board
- Managed project reporting to million-dollar donor
- Established the museum's social media presence

**MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY** – Chicago, IL

August 2006 to June 2010

**Project Director** – (9/07- 6/10)

Directed creative efforts of staff and vendors to design *Science Storms*, a 26,000 sq. ft. permanent exhibition on physics and chemistry featuring a 3-story tornado and other large-scale phenomena. Led research, design, and evaluation of over 50 exhibit stations, 120 artifacts, and several interactive artworks. *Science Storms* won the industry's highest awards: American Alliance of Museums award for Overall Excellence in Exhibitions (AAM 2011); Roy Shafer Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (ASTC 2011); 20 Most Influential Exhibitions This Century (SEGC 2018); and Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement (Themed Entertainment Association 2010).

- Procured \$125K from the Dreyfus Foundation to develop interactive periodic table
- Presented *Science Storms* to \$10M donors
- Produced a blog leading up to the launch of *Science Storms* and initiated the museum's first podcast series

**Senior Project Manager** – (8/06 to 8/07)

Managed the production of *Science Storms* through the Schematic Design Phase. Established \$30-million budget projection, developed four-year schedule, and produced RFPs and contracts.

**CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM** – Chicago, IL

August 2003 to July 2006

**Associate Vice President, Partnership of Playful Learners** – (06/04-7/06)

Reported to President and CEO. Served as Principal Investigator for the *Partnership of Playful Learners* (PPL), applying Reggio Emilia education methods to promote family learning in museum programs and exhibits. Established strategic partnership to conduct research program with Northeastern University, apply research findings to family/school programs and exhibition design, and conduct outreach to YMCA branches in Latino and African American communities. Received the AAM award for Special Achievement in Cooperative Learning (2010).

- Led CCM's first major federal grant proposal submission in over a decade and secured \$1.7 million in funding
- Attended Reggio Emilia Study Tour in Italy to observe methods of project documentation and reflection
- Designed time-lapse photo stations to capture children's building, inspired by Reggio Emilia approaches

**Associate Vice President, Production & New Ventures** – August 2003 to January 2004

Led project management for CCM's planned \$25M renovation. Oversaw master planning, architecture, and construction management through Schematic Design. Served as liaison to Board of Directors' Building Committee. Developed the \$25M budget projection, cash flow, exhibit schedule, and phased building renovation schedule.

**THE TECH MUSEUM OF INNOVATION** – San Jose, CA

June 1995 to June 2003

**Senior Director of Exhibits and Programs** – (11/02 to 6/03) **Director of Exhibits** – (6/99 to 11/02)

Reported to VP of Exhibitions. Led 13 staff in designing permanent exhibitions, developing public programs, and hosting traveling exhibits. Managed \$2.3M annual operating and capital budget and served as liaison to Exhibits and Programs Committee of the Board. Recruited creative professionals from around the country and built a cohesive team. Closed out 15+ contracts after the new facility opened, and, tutored by bitter experience, developed fabrication standards, multimedia standards, graphic design standards, etc. to clarify client and vendor responsibilities.

- Developed a 5-year plan leading to over \$4 million in new project funding within three years
- Developed a partnership with Stanford University to enable visitors to interact with working scientists, wrote successful \$1.6 million proposal to NIH. The partnership is still flourishing
- Secured \$982,000 from the National Science Foundation for the NetPla@net exhibition about the "anything to anything" network, developing an exhibit about the "Internet of Things" before the phrase existed

**Exhibit Developer and Project Manager** (6/95-6/99)

Led the research and development of \$3.5 million *Communications: Global Connections* gallery as part of the Tech's 1998 expansion. Developed exhibits, prepared budget projections, managed vendors, coordinated advisor input.

- Made successful fundraising presentations to CEOs of Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, and other tech companies

**CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM** – Chicago, IL

May 1991 to August 2002

**Exhibit Developer** – (05/91 to 08/02)

Developed the popular *Inventing Lab*, *Waterways*, and *Under Construction* exhibits for CCM's Navy Pier location. Wrote successful \$240K NSF grant proposal and \$25K AT&T Foundation proposal. Select exhibit experiences were replicated by the Pittsburgh Children's Museum, the Please Touch Museum, and many others.

## EDUCATION

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**HARVARD UNIVERSITY** – Cambridge, MA (1989)

*Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (John Harvard Scholarship for high academic distinction)*

**REGGIO CHILDREN** – Reggio, Italy (2005)

Attended study tour of education methods pioneered by pre-school educators in Reggio, Italy

## LANGUAGES

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Italian, French, Spanish

## KEY SKILLS

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|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Strategic Planning        | • Family Learning            | • Master Plans & Capital Campaigns |
| • Partnerships and Grants   | • Applied Learning Research  | • Budget Oversight (\$25M+)        |
| • Board and Donor Relations | • Math Anxiety/Math Learning | • Inclusive Design Practices       |
| • Social Media Marketing    | • Early Brain Development    | • Visitor Experience               |

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

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American Association of Museums, Association of Science-Technology Centers, Pumping Station One makerspace, Workshop 88 makerspace

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

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- Hellenga, Rachel. **When Every Visitor is a VIP: The Personalized Museum Visit.** (2013) *Dimensions* (American Alliance of Museums journal)
- Hellenga, Rachel. **True Stories from Your Peers: The Interplay Between Evaluation and Project Implementation.** *The Principal Investigator's Guide: Managing Evaluation in Informal STEM Education.* (2011) Center for the Advancement of Informal Science Education online guide, Washington, D.C., Chapter 1.
- Hellenga, Rachel. **Bullying Prevention Games at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center.** *Museums at Play: Games, Interaction, and Learning.* (2011). Museums, Etc., Edinburgh.
- Hellenga, Rachel. **Designing an Exhibit for Research.** (2004). *Hand to Hand.* (Association of Children's Museums journal)

## MEDIA INTERVIEWS

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- **Changing Kids, Edu Toys, Building Museum Exhibits, and Making - with Rachel Hellenga.** *This Should Work* podcast hosted by Jay Margalus.
- **World Maker Faire - Resnick, Hellenga and Gauntlett on the maker movement;** *David Gauntlett* Youtube channel.
- **Look for the Verbs - with Rachel Hellenga;** *Exhibitricks* blog hosted by Paul Orselli.

## PATENTS

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**Kit for electrifying an assembly of bricks in a brick building system, Assignee, Rachel Hellenga**

Patent #US20170189828A, Patent #US9782686B2

## DIGITAL PORTFOLIO

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Please visit [Hellenga.com](http://Hellenga.com) to access project case studies and links to publications and media interviews.

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